

Work Sample: Poetry

Maadulampazham* (In Which Her Daughter Hears the Diagnosis) (2018)

round galaxies of blood overripe globules of life
packed inside your hull leave acrimsonstain
each self-contained sigil a smear of loss
waits to be called forth without its former name
one perfect string of red jewels smudged to shadows
fire opals curled up inside like a viper who waits
the velvet box you hid in corners conceals her brood
lest they be discovered until seasons of pressure give way & they're freed
or ripped from your grasp by some force then swallowed whole

you salvaged polished the remains of its peel
categorized its seeds Punica Granatum Persephone's bane
once juicy rubicund left to souronthebranch
kept safe hidden by the devil's subtraction reducing fibers
vigilance & muscle to bits unraveling connections frayed false
memories lemon Pledge a sort of reverse alchemy scrawling
swirls on maple wood a freehand alphabet tangled yet disjointed
daily meals scrubblings within the rind shapingfaulty semantics
lights out times four for which exists no lexicon
you washed dried & sorted unable to decipher the movements of thought
starched pressed & folded unable to unknow the unraveling of hope
a place for everything & a displacement of home throws out
everything in its place

I pick up these moments my touchstone my source
one by one like coins I used to drink

(Maadulampazham, page 2, stanza continues)

from a fountain obscured	each night while I wished to see your heart
finally brought to the surface	illuminated by the sun
I gather the sum as	I try to ease the pain of culling
I bless the thing that pulled	you down from on high
and split you open	

*Tamil word meaning both pomegranate and a woman's mind

First appeared in *Gigantic Sequins*

I Caught a Train to Dublin Once (2016)

after Louis MacNeice

Your empty fists, your broken smoke,
your wooden strength
sift themselves into wisps of thought
carrying me about and seeking to give me more,
though more cannot be gathered up.

My sinews and marrow evanesce
into trails of shadow
passing through landscapes of slanting rain.
Long ago I yearned to translate
a kiss, to distill the joy in laughter, to
navigate the wandering path
of a hand.

Now, looking ahead past the waves of wheat,
past the rolling sea,
past the whitewashed walls,
I follow the tracks of your alchemy
and open my ears to the gold we breathe.

What the Moon Believes (2017)

Man Ray's *La Marquise Casati* gazes
outward on the wall facing the windows
 she seeks the sea
insect eyes double exposure
distinctions of eyelashes and pupils blurred
the pallor of her skin against the void behind
 so much like the moon
lost in its own push and pull

framed in her vault on high
perhaps she wishes the ocean
would wash her make her holy
ravish her until she's no longer lonely
or perhaps she wishes the ocean
would drag her to earth
overwhelm her with its gravity
crush her until she's no longer lonely

like a boy who sits on the shore
clutching a kitten limp and lifeless
his hands tremble like water
 unaware of the cruelty
driven by his love for the soft sweet thing

First appeared in *The Ekphrastic Review*

This is the Poem Where I Rewrite Your Story (2018)

morning your little-boy-mouth shaped a vowel the geese couldn't spell
only sharp letters engraved into the sky your tiny fist in mine like a cherry
stone tucked inside my cheek watching your Daddy returned to the dirt
where he belonged you sniffed & reset your jaw abandoned my hand
for a dandelion stuck underfoot so serious as you popped off its head
& watched it drop

evening the shelter holds so many bodies you shiver away the cold
your breath's cadence uneven rapid then slow taps its code against
my cheek as you sleep murmurs & moans transcribe the phonics of sorrow
into the air how to decipher this four year rune how to extract this
narrative taken root my fingers search for truth while I trace the raised
hieroglyphs on your skin

dead of night if only I could crack open your sternum shake out its
burdens like splitting wide the rocks and trees held together by God's
Word if only I could unravel your father's secrets wound up inside
rip out his wormwood and snakeroot I would re-inscribe your name
as a charm onto your still-growing bones